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WORK IN PROGRESS

German migration to Groningen and Drenthe in the 19th and early 20th century

Erwin Karel and Richard Paping (University of Groningen)

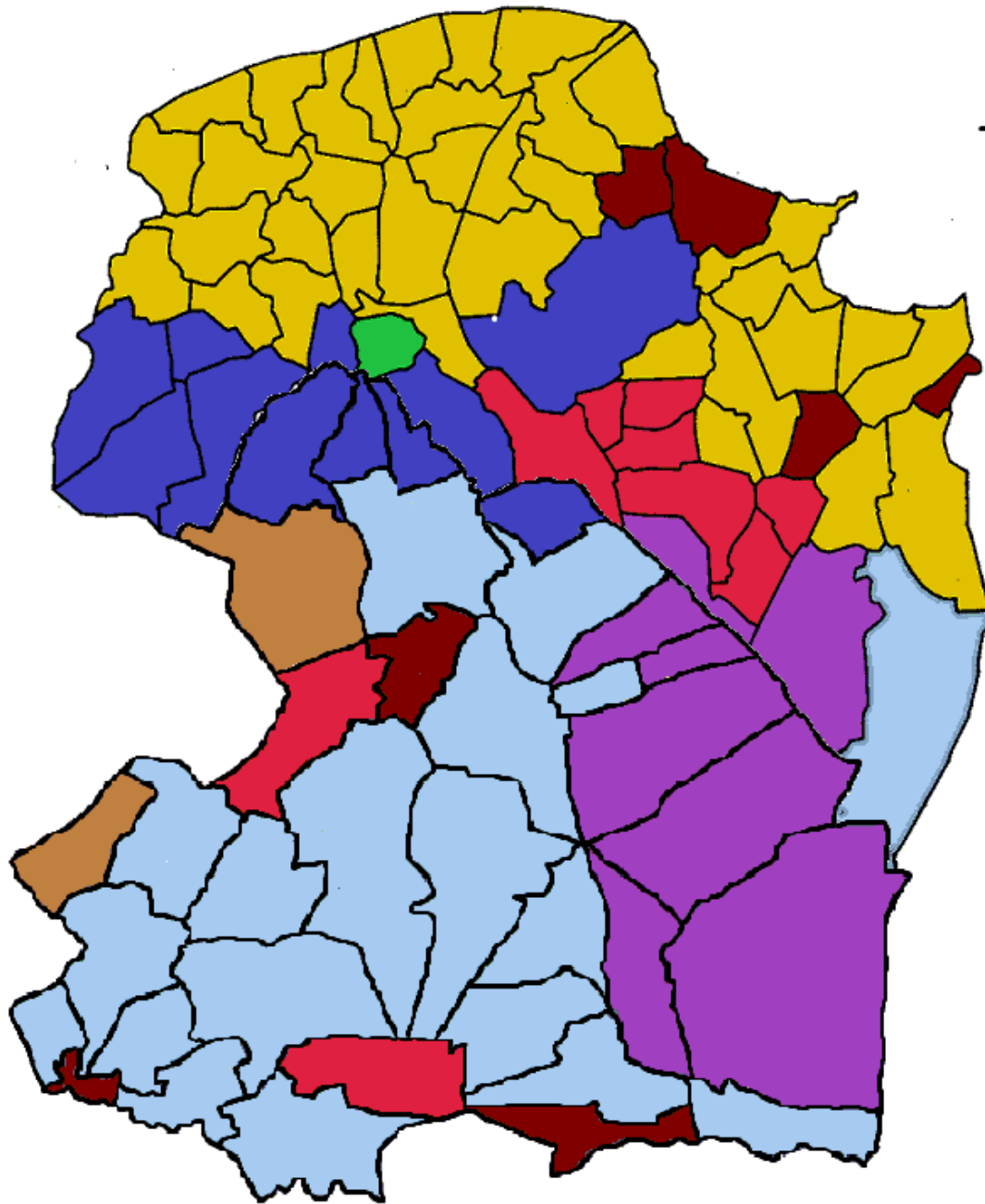
Preliminary paper, presented at the Workshop: new perspectives on the history of migration in the Northern Netherlands and the Northwest of Germany (29 August 2016)

1. Introduction

In this paper we will try to give a view of the nineteenth and early twentieth century German migration to the provinces Groningen and Drenthe (both situated in the north of the Netherlands), employing the data stemming from the very large digitalised databases from AlleGroningers.nl and AlleDrenten.nl. We will especially concentrate upon those men and women who migrated unmarried to these provinces, using the marriage registers for the period 1811-1934 as our main source. These German migrants usually migrated individually at the end of their teenage years or in their early twenties to the north of the Netherlands. Only a few of them will have migrated as a young child with their family, taking into account that this kind of family migration over country borders was quite limited. The choice of sources for migration is not very broad and using marriage registers implies that those German migrants who remained unmarried are not included in the analysis. Most Germans marrying in the Netherlands will have settled there in the ten years before the marriage date (we will restrict ourselves to first marriages).

An alternative source for migration are the death records, which are digitally available for even a longer period 1811-1959. Usually in these death certificates the place of birth is listed. These certificates have the advantage that even some of the end of the eighteenth-century migrants are being captured. A disadvantage, however, is that people die at very different ages, making it difficult to precisely indicate when the German persons found in the source actually emigrated to Drenthe or Groningen. Because of these differences in age the information at death diverges also quite a lot per person. Nevertheless, we might try to analyse this information in a later phase of the project.

At first, we will discuss the places of settlement of German immigrants, assuming that mostly the place of marriage was also the place of settlement. We will make a difference between the city of Groningen, smaller towns, market-oriented rural municipalities in the clay region (Groningen), more traditional rural municipalities on sandy soil (mainly Drenthe), old and new peat colonies, and rural municipalities with rather mixed characteristics basing ourselves on a different joint paper (Karel & Paping 2016, see map 1). Next, we will address the development of German migration over time, making a difference between males and females, and show that this migration became relatively less important in the course of the nineteenth century, with a rise again after WW1. We will also look at the development over time in the different regions in Drenthe and Groningen.



Map 1: Different socio-economic regions in Groningen and Drenthe.

NB: Green: city of Groningen; Dark red: small towns; Pink: old peat colonies; Purple: new peat colonies; Light blue: traditional rural area; Yellow brown: market-oriented rural area; Brown: pauper colonies; Dark Blue: mixed rural area.

Afterwards, we will briefly look at the parts in Germany where the migrants are originating from, by investigating the villages and cities with the highest number of migrants. Next to this, we will compare the ages at marriage of German migrants with the rest. In the end we will discuss the occupations of the German migrants upon marriage, and look if there are large differences with those born in the Netherlands.

This paper gives only a first overview of the characteristics of the German migrants. We will try to investigate how these characteristics in general and their development over time can be explained. Explanatory variables can be the diverging economic structure of places of origin and settlement, and also the diverging economic developments in different regions.

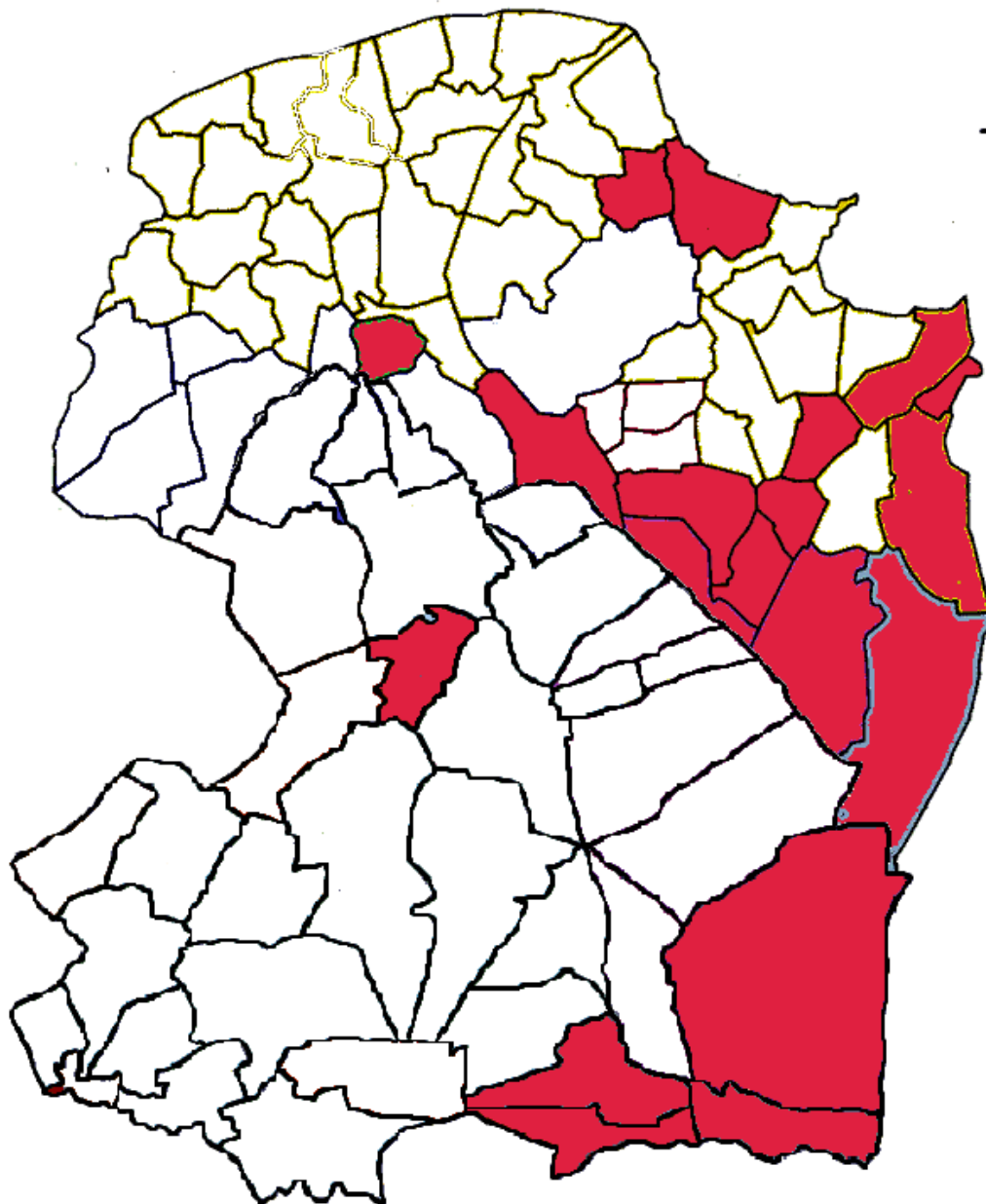
2. Geographical distribution of settlement of German immigrants

Not surprisingly, it was the large city of Groningen that attracted the most immigrants in the period 1811-1934, as this was by far the most populous municipality of the Dutch provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. Also it will not come as a surprise that in the border municipalities the number of immigrants was also very high. For the rest it were some of the peat colonies and most of the small towns (Appingedam, Delfzijl, Assen, Winschoten en Coevorden) who attracted numerous Germans. However, somewhat further away, in the countryside, either traditional or market-oriented not so many Germans settled in each municipality.

Table 1. Top twenty municipalities with German immigrants, 1811-1934

Groningen	2383	Oude Pekela	271
Emmen	847	Nieuweschans	264
Dalen and Schoonebeek*	546	Coevorden	242
Beerta	530	Delfzijl	239
Bellingwolde	501	Nieuwe Pekela	218
Winschoten	479	Assen	202
Coevorden	396	Hoogezand	172
Onstwedde	340	Wildervank	172
Vlagtwedde	315	Appingedam	161
Veendam	281		
Total 20 municipalities	8,711	Total 2 provinces	11,767

* Schoonebeek was before 1884 part of g a part of the municipality Dalen.



Map 2: municipalities with the largest absolute number of German immigrants in the period 1811-1934.

The geographical distribution of the German settlers suggests that two aspects played an important role in their migration decision. Firstly, the vicinity to the border of Dutch places shows that German migration was partly migration over relatively short distances. People were moving to neighboring villages which were situated just on the other side of the border. If this is correct, many of the German migrants have to come from German villages near the Dutch border in , Emsland and Bentheim. Secondly, and even more importantly, a lot of migration was for economic reasons. Nearly a quarter went to the city of Groningen, and more than 10% went to the small towns who presumably offered more employment opportunities. The attractiveness of the older - usually large - peat colonies fits also in this kind of migration. Next to this, it has to be reminded that especially in

the municipalities on the German border peat digging was rapidly increasing in the nineteenth century, attracting numerous peat labourers.

3. The development of German immigration over time, 1811-1934

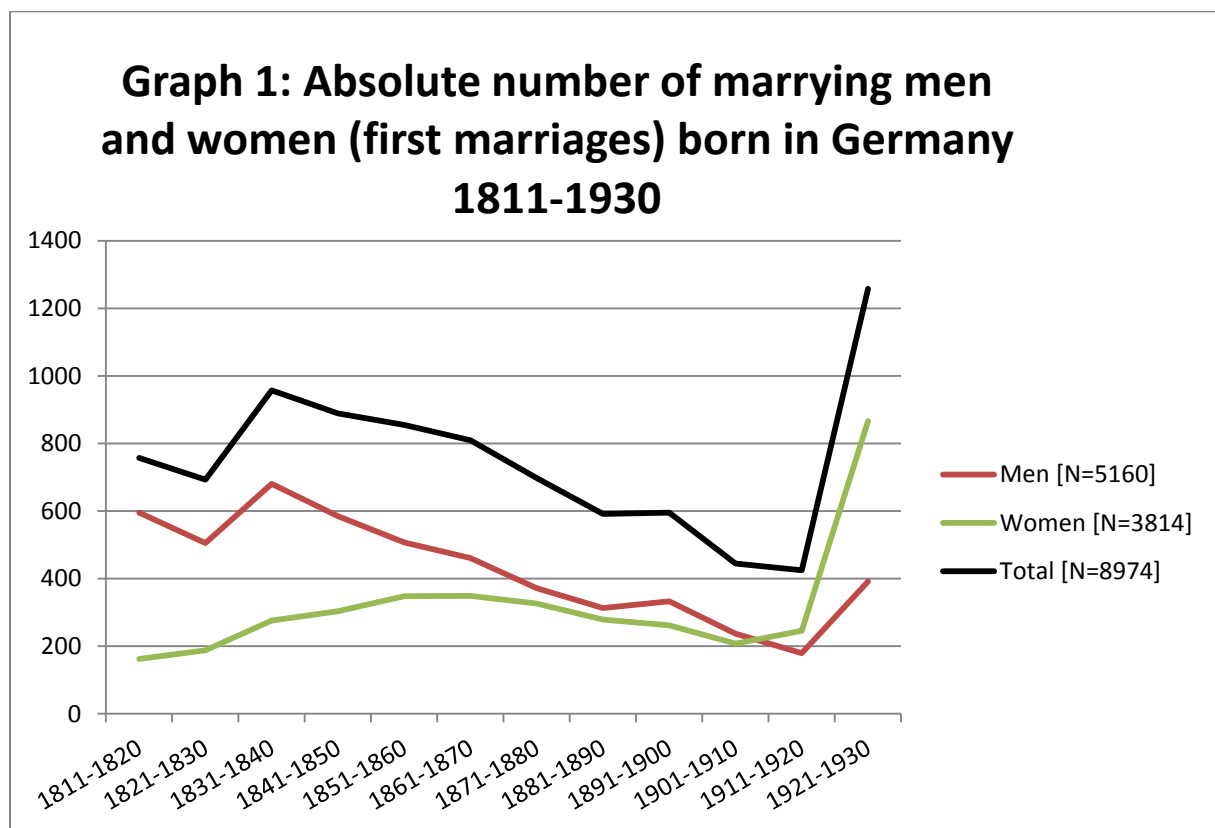
In general, the absolute number of German immigrants marrying in Groningen and Drenthe showed a steady decrease from the period 1831/1840 onwards for nearly a century.¹ In the two decades 1811/1820 and 1821/1830, however, their number seems lower. We have to take into account that our data give a slightly retarded picture of the actual developments, inasmuch as most Germans will have already settled in the Netherlands some years before their marriage. It has to be remarked that also in some other respects the data can give a distorted picture for this period. Population was rising quite rapidly with 1% annual, so the rise of about 20% between 1811/1820 and 1831/1840 is in line with the general population growth. Next to this it has to be taken into account that the quality of the data on birth places in marriage records is somewhat less for the period 1811/1820, and we are missing marriages from the first seven months of 1811. If we take all this into account, there was not a structural relative increase in German immigrants in the long run in the first decades we studies. However, the data suggest a temporary drop in the period 1821/1830, that might be related to strongly falling agricultural prices that might have diminished the attraction of these two northern Dutch provinces.

Unfortunately we do not have actual numbers on German immigrants in the eighteenth century. It might be possible that their number also was 100 or even more annually. The German migration to Drenthe will have been considerably lower. However, the migration to Groningen, and especially the city and the peat colonies could have been higher than in the early nineteenth century. Schroor (2014, p. 100) gives for the city of Groningen for 1701/1750 on average 10 new male official inhabitants ("burgers), but only 6 for the period 1751/95. The actual number of German immigrants, however, must have been considerably higher according to the number of Germans having their banns published in the city. In the period 1701/1725 this relates to 99 persons annually, in the period 1746/1755 to 79 persons and in the period 1781/1785 to only 59 (Schroor 2014, p. 114). However, even that last number is still much higher than the 15-20 Germans reported marrying in the city in first half of the nineteenth century (Graph 2), even if we take into account that the registers with marriage banns will exaggerate the actual numbers slightly as some of the Germans reported will actually have married outside the city.

Notwithstanding the rapid population growth in both Drenthe and Groningen, the number of marrying German migrants fell to slightly more than 40 annually in the period 1911/1920. German immigration became unimportant for Groningen and Drenthe, certainly if also we look at the total population numbers. The two provinces counted about 175.000 inhabitants in 1809, 270.000 in 1850, and 445,000 in 1900. The low number of migrants in 1911/20 might be related to the First World War, which will have been a serious hindrance for migration from Germany to the Netherlands.

¹ In the Netherlands as a whole, looking at the amount of people born in Germany, immigration fell drastically after 1820, however, started to increase again after 1869 (Lucassen 2005, p. 56). This development suggest some differences in development between Groningen and Drenthe and the rest of the Netherlands.

However, WW1 cannot be the whole explanation, as the number of German immigrants was already very low in the marriage registers in the period 1901/1910. The fall in attraction of Drenthe and Groningen in this century from 1830 onward, partly was related to the stagnating economy in these two provinces combined with a very strong natural population growth. These were not the circumstances that made settlement in the north of the Netherlands very attractive. In the course of the second half of the nineteenth century economic developments improved, however, these improved even more in Germany. If Germans were searching for a better life with good job opportunities, they rather could go for instance to the rapidly industrializing German *Ruhrgebiet* or the flourishing German cities.

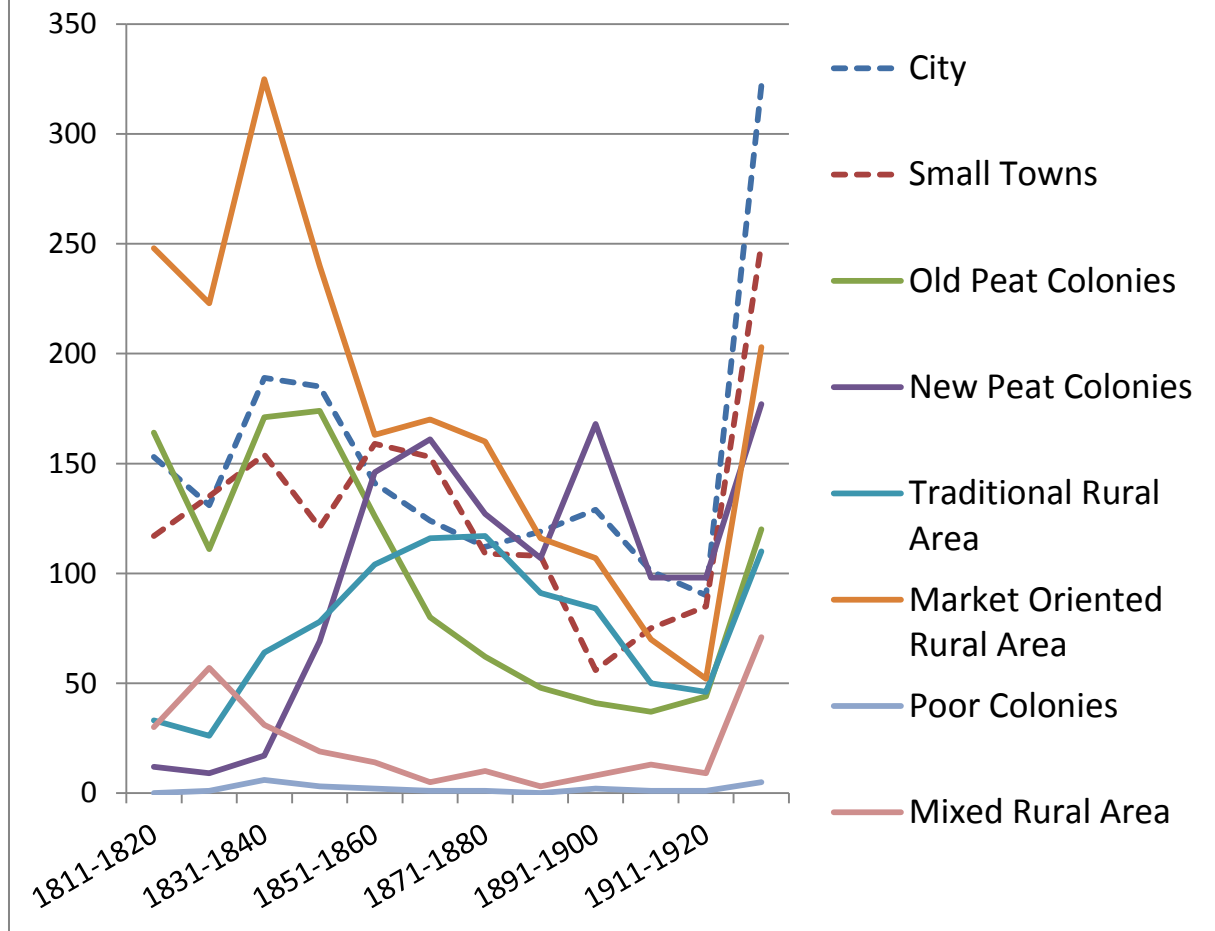


The period 1921/1930 showed a clear reversal in migration trends. Suddenly the number of born Germans marrying increased to a clear top of over 1,200. Economic problems in Germany after WW1 will have enormously stimulated travelling to the Netherlands again. This was especially a female phenomenon. It were German women who made up the majority of the German immigrants. A first glimpse of this development can already be seen in the period 1911/1920 when the number of women immigrants was already larger than of men, which by the way shows that not many German males managed to escape from the war by settling in the north of the Netherlands. In the period 1921/1930 more than two third of the German immigrants marrying were females. Presumably, this high percentage will have something to do with the rising number of German female living-in servants in the Netherlands in this period (Henkes 2001; 2011; Lucassen 2005, p. 71). Because of the high number of male casualties there was a high excess of young females in Germany after WW1. It is not more than rational that part of these women went to the neighboring country, where the economy was doing much better, but where there was also not a lack of potential male marriage

partners, as in Germany. Perhaps many of the German female servants in the Netherlands returned after some years, but our figures also show that many Germans also settled structurally at least in Groningen and Drenthe.

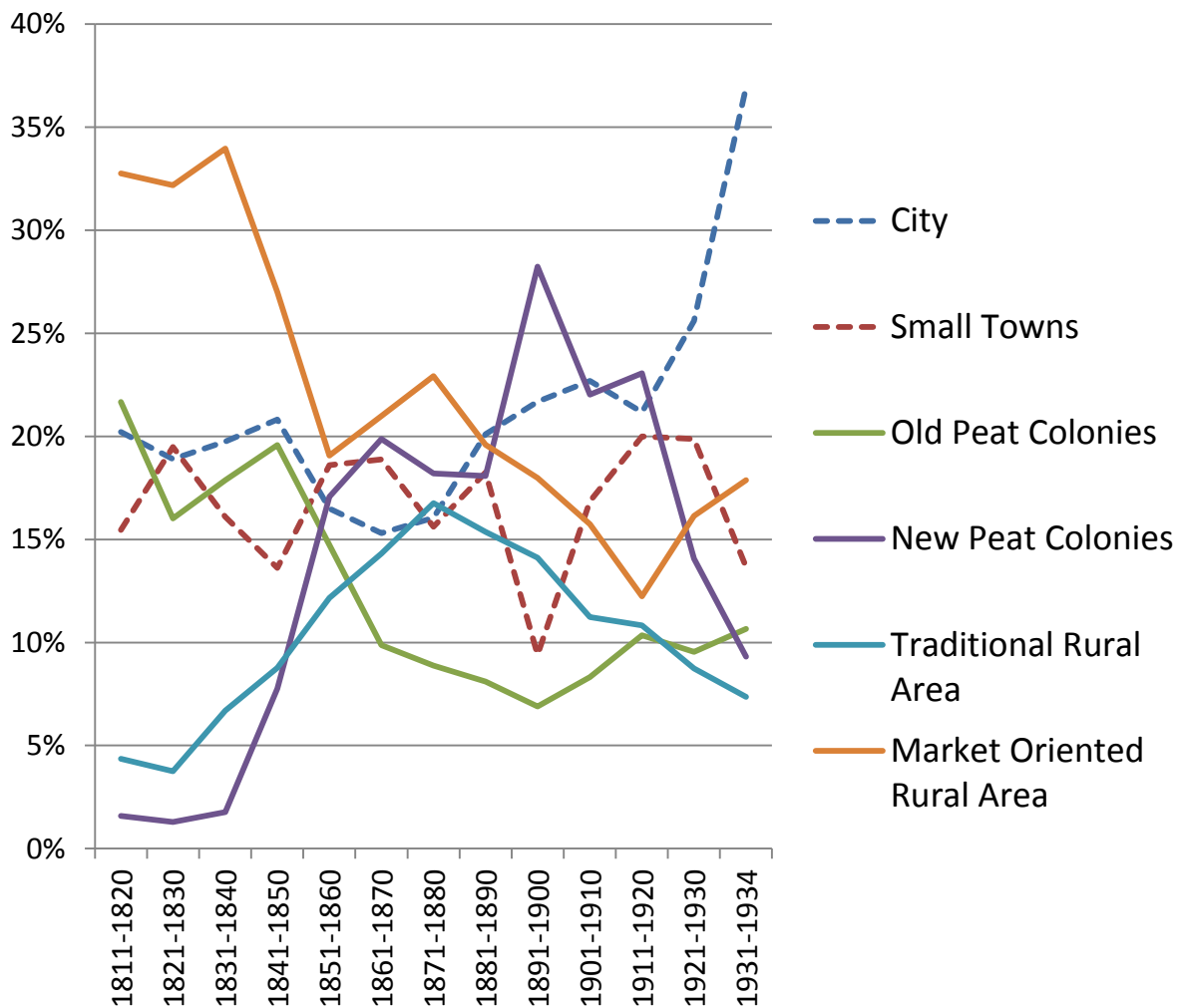
In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the division between males and females within the German marrying immigrants was still completely the opposite. Women account for only a quarter to a third of the immigrants. German immigration to Groningen and Drenthe was typically a male phenomenon. Already from 1821/30 onwards the share of women was rising continuously. A development going on until 1871/80. While the number of male immigrants was falling rapidly, the number female immigrants was increasing slowly, but consistently. Possibly this signifies a difference in character between male and female German immigration. The falling economic possibilities meant an incentive for many German males not to go to the north of the Netherlands, while for females these economic reasons seemed less important. Possibly, short-distance migration over the border might have been more important for them. This hypothesis, however, we did not test for this first draft of the paper. We would expect in that case also that male German immigration in the period 1871/1880 to 1911/1920 would be more over short distances than in the earlier period.

Graph 2. Absolute number of marrying people born in Germany 1811-1930
[N=8974]



Graph 2 shows that the general development of German immigration just sketched, happened in nearly all the separate regions we distinguish. The strongest fall in German immigration happened in the market-oriented rural area situated in the north of Groningen with a fall from 25-30 German immigrants in the first half of the nineteenth century to only 5 in the period 1911/20. In most other regions as the city of Groningen, the small towns, and the old peat colonies this fall was less strong. Two regions show a diverging development. Not surprisingly, the attraction of the new peat colonies was increasing rapidly around 1850, due to the extensive reclamation of new peat fields in this period in for instance Onstwedde and later on Emmen offering new job opportunities. More remarkable is the continuous rising attraction until 1870/80 of the traditional rural area, mainly the sandy municipalities in Drenthe. This might suggest that this were still quite closed societies around 1820 where German immigrants did not have much opportunities, however, with the rising dependence on the market in the nineteenth century, settling in the traditional rural area also seems to have become a possibility, at least for some Germans.

**Graph 3. Relative distribution of marrying persons born in Germany, 1811-1934
[N=9640]**



Graph 3 gives the relative distribution of marrying German immigrants between the most important regions we distinguish. Clear is the strong relative decline of the market-oriented rural area (north Groningen) after 1840, we already pointed at. German immigration to these municipalities was spread very evenly, with only the border municipalities Beerta and Bellingwolde as outstanding exceptions, showing up at place 4 and 5 of the municipalities with the largest number of marrying German immigrants. Short-distance migration from Ostfriesland to these rather similar economies will have played a large role. Nevertheless, the attraction for Germans of even this nearby places must have diminished structurally in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Remarkable is the relative rise in importance of the city of Groningen. As we already discussed, the city of Groningen received very large numbers of German immigrants in the eighteenth century. In the first half of the nineteenth century, however, its share of the Groningen an Drenthe total was with about 20% rather low. This share started to rise again after 1870, although absolute numbers still decreased slightly. It was after 1920 that absolute and relative shares strongly increased, perhaps

because of many female German servants going to the rapidly growing, modernizing and industrializing city. Graph 3 shows also that with the crisis in peat digging from 1920 onwards, the attraction of the new peat colonies rapidly decreased for new German settlers.

4. Geographical origin of German immigrants in Groningen and Drenthe

There were some difficulties, trying to analyze the places of origin of the marrying German immigrants reported in the marriage registers in the Dutch provinces of Groningen and Drenthe. Inasmuch as the indications of the names of German settlements in the Dutch civil registers are not always clear-cut, and also some names can refer to different places (for instance Neukirchen), it is difficult to precisely spell out where the German migrants came from. Also it is very time-consuming to find out the location of each German place mentioned in the sources, so in first instance we have restricted ourselves to the place names which were mentioned at least 5 times. Our first analyzes only looks at the birth places of male German immigrants. In a later phase we want to extend our analysis also to the female immigrants.

A very considerable part of the male German immigrants came from Ostfriesland, taking into account table 2 and table 3. Ostfriesland only directly borders the Netherlands. It were especially the border villages in Ostfriesland which show up high in the top 20, Bunde, Weener and Wymeer. The actual number of immigrants from these places will have been higher, as tiny settlements part of these places were rather often mentioned separately in the marriage registers. For the municipality of Bunde which today also comprises Wymeer, this was the case for instance for Landschaftpolder, Bunderhammrich, Bunderhee, Charlottenpolder, Tichelwarf, Dunebroek and Bunderneuland. For all these small settlements a considerable number of immigrants were reported. We are still struggling with a way how to arrange our geographical data on German origins. Is there a consistent division of German places into clear-cut smaller territories. At the moment we will present our data using the larger territories of Emsland, Bentheim and Ostfriesland.

Interestingly, one of the top origins was also the larger city of Emden in Ostfriesland, while Norden, which lies even further away at the coast in Ostfriesland also shows up in the top 20. Presumably, this is an indication of the strong relations between Emden (and Norden) and the city of Groningen, which still might have existed in the nineteenth century. In the future we will have to test if these migrants born in Emden (and Norden) indeed settled in the city of Groningen.

Table 2. Top twenty municipalities with marrying male German immigrants, 1811-1934

Bunde	281	O-Fr.		Noordhorn	67	Benth.
Weener	202	O-Fr.		Norden	60	O-Fr.
Emden	195	O-Fr.		Werlte	60	Emsl.
Wymeer	189	O-Fr.		Wesuwe	57	Emsl.
Emlichheim	187	Benth.		Ditzum	52	O-Fr.
Leer	126	O-Fr.		Lindloh	52	Emsl.

Velthausen	126	Benth.		Uelsen	51	Benth.
Rutenbrock	92	Emsl.		Borkum	44	O-Fr.
Stapelmoor	75	O-Fr.		Jemgum	44	O-Fr.
Neuenhaus	70	Benth.		Hebelermeer	43	Emsl.

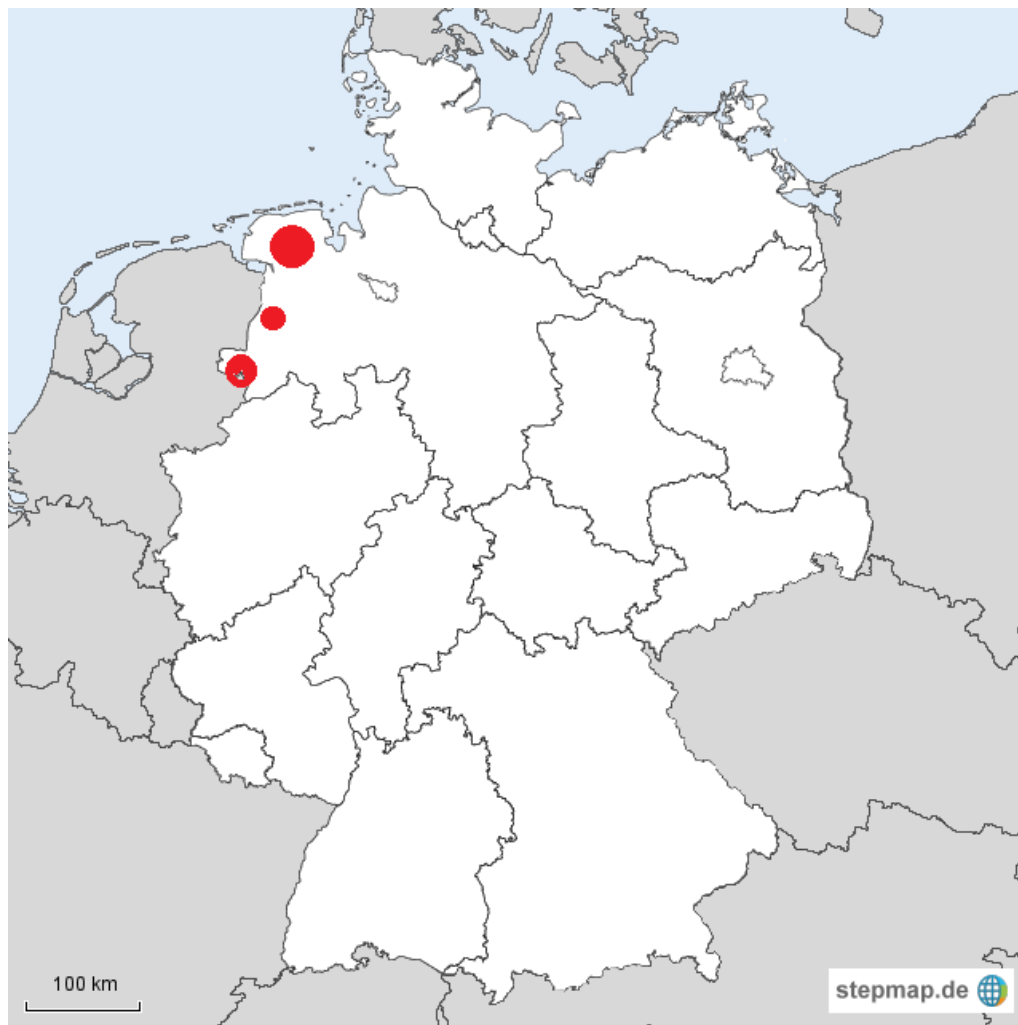
To our surprise, the share of Emsland in the German immigrants was quite low, although it has a quite lengthy border with Groningen and Drenthe. You would expect border villages like Rhede, Heede, Lehe, Dersum, Dorpen, Walchum and Lathen, or the larger Papenborg to appear in the top 20. However, it were only villages more south in Emsland that delivered many immigrants to Groningen and Drenthe, as Rutenbrock, Lindloh and Hebelermeer lying very near to Emmen. Presumably most of them went to the nearby Dutch new peat districts in the nineteenth century.

Table 3. Villages of birth with five or more male migrants that married in Groningen/Drenthe, 1811-1934 (N=4568)

Ostfriesland	1866	41%
Bentheim	786	17%
Emsland	814	18%
Westfalen (rest)	750	16%
Other regions	352	8%
Total	4,568	100%

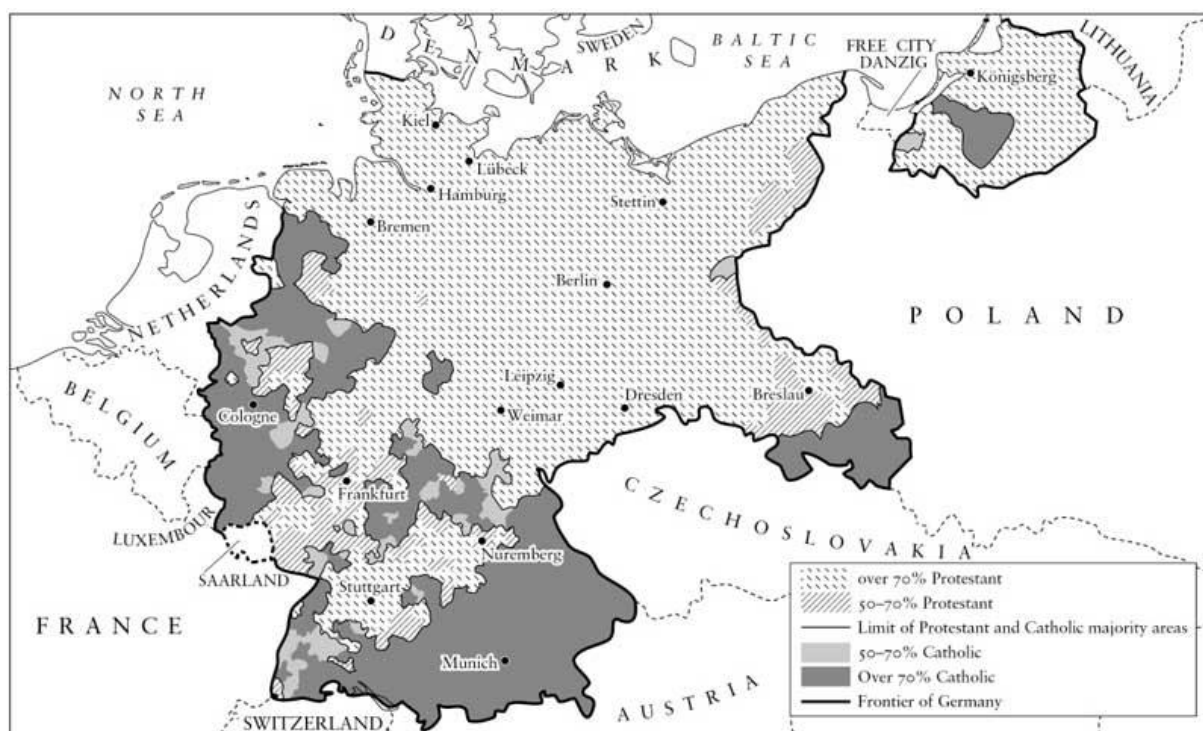
An important reason for the low amount of German immigrants from the northern part of Emsland will have been, that the inhabitants of these villages were Roman Catholic, while Groningen and Drenthe were largely Calvinistic protestants (see map 4). This difference in religion might have been a serious hindrance on migration. In that respect it is easy to explain why such a high number of German immigrants came from the largely Calvinistic protestant region of Ostfriesland.

The relatively high number of immigrants from Bentheim, which only borders Drenthe to some extent in the south fits also in this religious explanation of migration streams, as the share of Calvinistic protestants was also very high in this German region. The high number born in Emlichheim (in Dutch Emmelkamp) lying very nearby the Drenthe border does not come as a surprise. Although it must be stressed that the number of German immigrants from this Bentheim border village was much higher than comparable places in Emsland. Next to this in the top 20 Bentheim places like Neuenhaus, Velthausen, Uelsen and Nordhorn appear, which were actually more situated near the Dutch Overijssel border than the Drenthe border. Perhaps religious factors played again a role, as the nearby Dutch districts in Overijssel were largely Roman-Catholic, making perhaps Protestant Drenthe a more attractive place to settle.



Map 3. Birth districts of marrying German immigrants in Drenthe and Groningen, 1811-1934

This paragraph only contains a first analysis of the origins of German immigrants in Groningen and Drenthe. We did not take into account females. Also we did not try to look at differences over time, and also did not try to connect places of origin with places of settlement. Some of the suggestions done in the previous pages can be tested by doing such a more in-depth analysis.



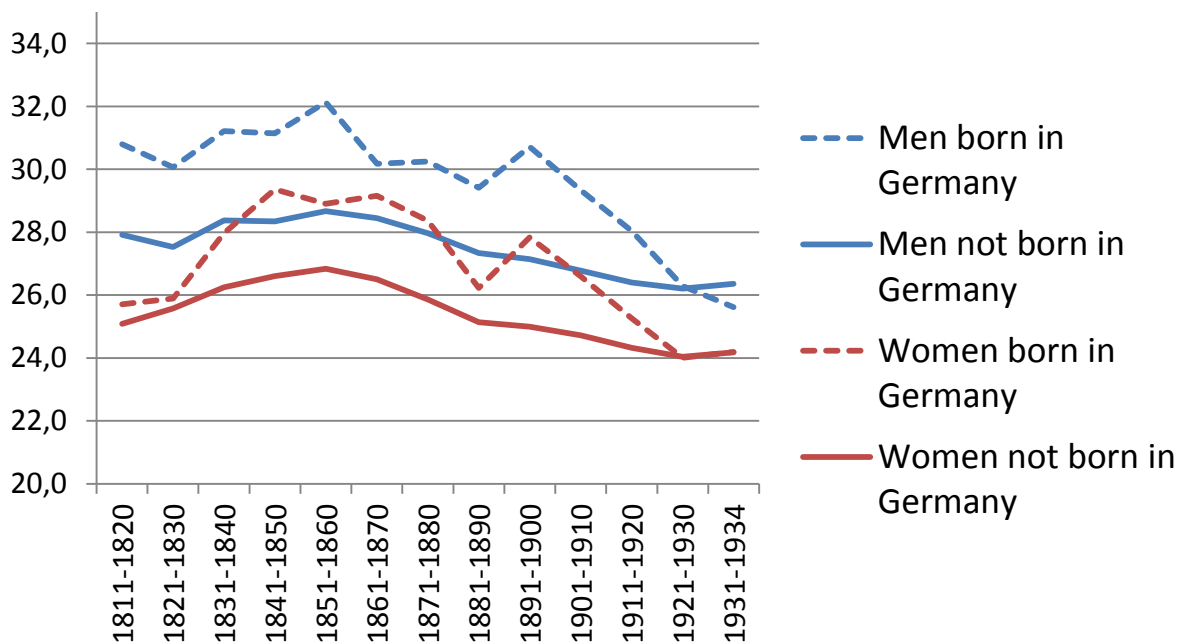
Map 4. Religious division of Germany ca. 1930.

Source: <http://www.historyonmaps.com/BWSamples/Religions.html>

5. Average age at marriage of German immigrants

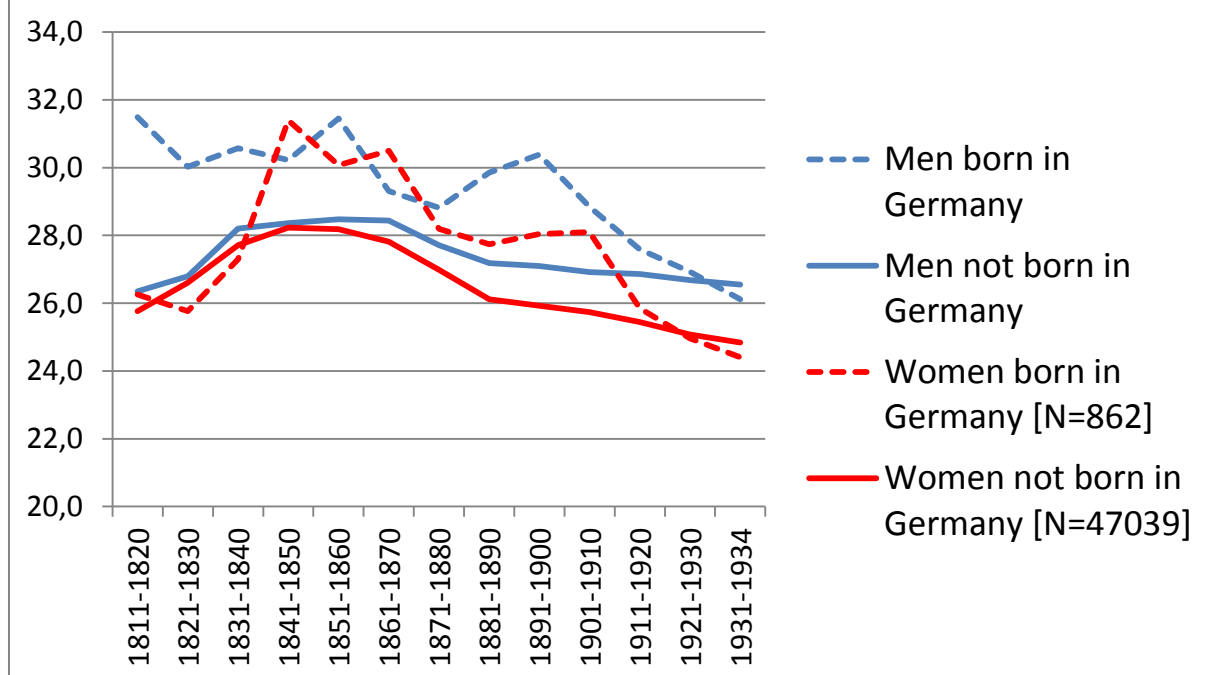
Graph 4 shows that the average age at first marriage was consistently higher for both male and female German immigrants in the period 1811-1934, except for the years from 1921 onwards. Male German immigrants married on average two to three years later than those born in the Netherlands. The last group of course mainly consists of people who did not migrate, or migrated only over a short distance. Interestingly, the development of the age at marriage of male German immigrants quite closely followed that of the natives with a small increase until 1851/60, and afterwards a fall until 1911/20. The substantial difference in age suggests that the migration process caused a serious delay in marriage, perhaps because it took time to find a new partner, but also while those marrying relatively young at the age of around 20, partly did not yet have migrated to the Netherlands, and might have married already in Germany. A part of the German immigrants will have moved to Groningen and Drenthe well in their twenties. Somewhat surprising in this respect is the near disappearance of the age difference after 1920, suggesting possibly that in this period of very low ages at first marriage (around 26), the process between finding a partner and marrying was very short both for Dutch and German immigrants, which might be also the origin of the strong fall in ages at marriage in this period.

Graph 4. Average age of marriage (men and women) Groningen and Drenthe 1811-1934



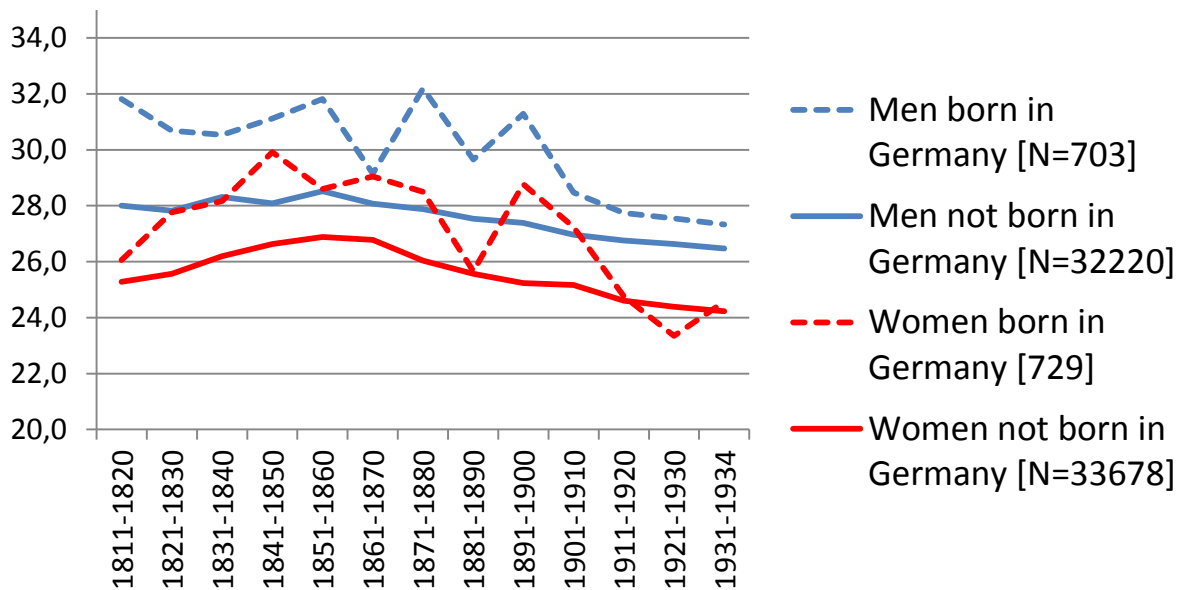
Developments in the age at first marriage for females are rather similar with that for males. German female immigrants married also later, and the development of their average age at marriage followed a similar pattern as that of the native females. Only in the period 1811/1830 the difference was much smaller. However, keep in mind that these numbers relate to only very few German women moving to the north of the Netherlands. In general, German females concluded marriages about two years later than native born females. Again this difference disappeared completely after 1921. As we already mentioned the immigration from Germany - after a long decrease - started to grow rapidly exactly in this period. The disappearance in the difference in age at marriage suggest that this after WW1 immigration form Germany had a definitely other character.

Graph 5. Average age of marriage (men and women) in City, 1811-1934

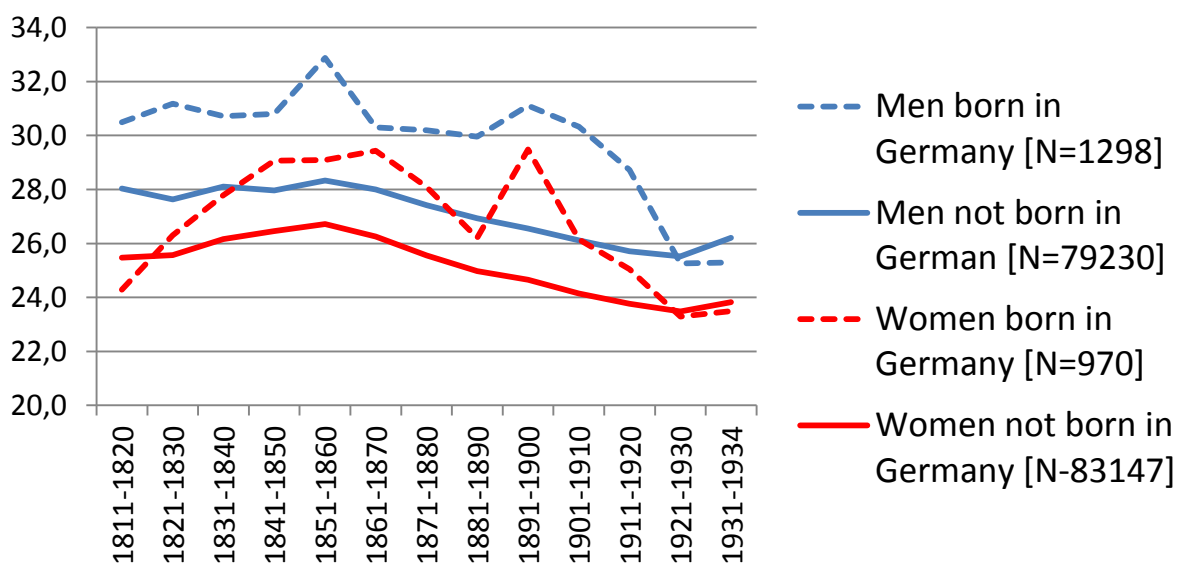


Taking into account that the numbers for German immigrants were small and so rather unstable, we also looked at the development of the age at first marriage in several regions where this kind of immigration was relatively important (Graph 5 to 7). In both the city of Groningen, the small towns and the old and new peat colonies age differences between marrying Germans and Dutch born nearly completely disappeared after 1921, while previously there was nearly always a large difference in age, with German immigrants marrying rather late. In specific periods there could be quite some differences between regions, however, this must be mainly related to the relatively small number of German immigrants in each decade for whom we know the average age at first marriage.

Graph 6. Average age of first marriage (men and women) in Small Towns 1811-1934

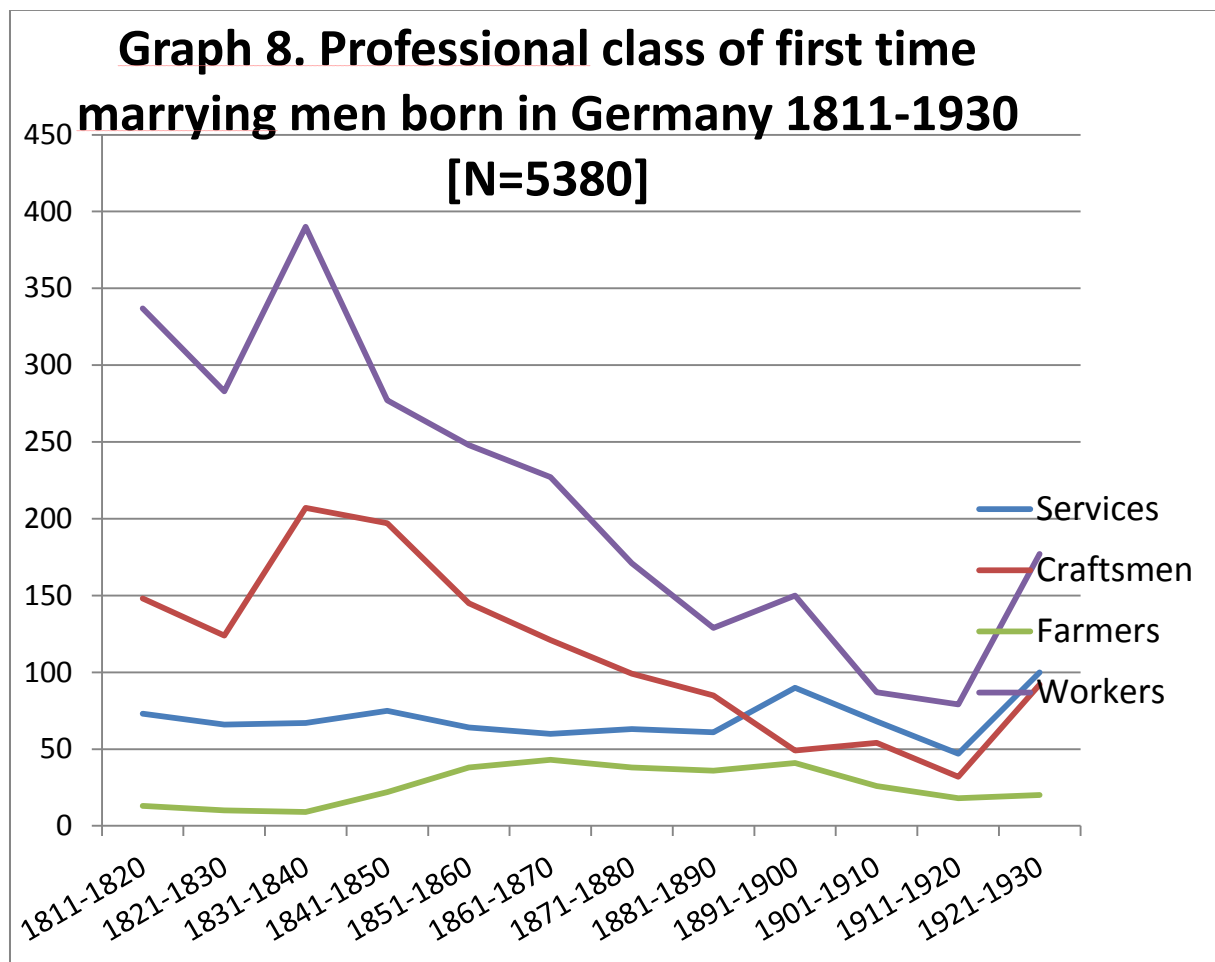


Graph 7. Average age of marriage (men and women) in Old and New Peat Colonies 1811-1934

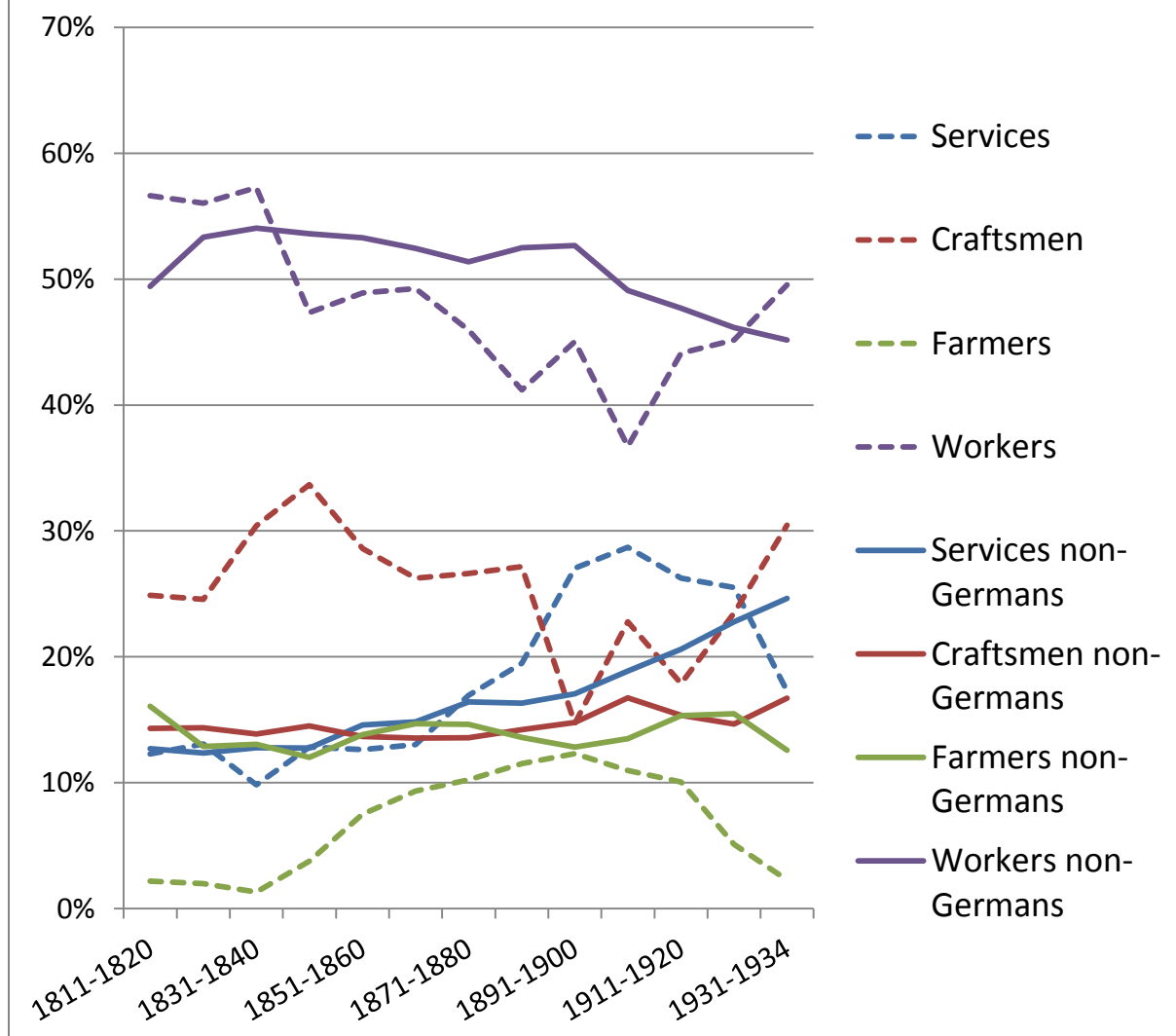


6. Occupations of German immigrants

The largest group of male German immigrants in the provinces Groningen and Drenthe established themselves as unskilled labourers as graph 8 shows. This category comprised very diverging groups like farm labourers, workers in brick factories (often from Lippe), peat diggers and unskilled urban workers doing all kind of things. Next largest group were artisans like carpenters, weavers and tailors. Although the entry of German merchants attracted a lot of attention in literature, in total the group Germans working in the service sector (merchants, shop-keepers, publicans and shippers) was fairly limited. However, in contrast with the other occupational groups their number did not diminish over time, but remained largely constant. The smallest group were the farmers. Only very few Germans managed to establish themselves with a farm in the first half of the nineteenth century. This number increased considerably (although the absolute numbers remained small) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Possibly, this was caused by several small German farmers settling on the other side of the border in Emmen and Schoonebeek, where the reclamation of land due to peat digging also created opportunities for small farms.



Graph 9. Professional classes compared between German and non German marrying man 1811-1934



Surprisingly, the differences between the general occupational structure of male German immigrants and others in the provinces of Groningen and Drenthe are fairly limited, if we use the previously mentioned rough division in four groups. Unskilled labourers were the largest category for both groups. Their share within the German immigrants was higher in the first three decades studied, and also slightly from 1921 onwards. The diminishing of importance after 1840 might be related to the fall in attraction of the market-oriented rural area for Germans, where labourers formed a large part of the work force. The later rise after 1921 might suggest that it were actually relatively poor male German immigrants that increasingly went to the Netherlands after WW1.

The share of artisans and other industrial workers within the male German immigrants was nearly double that of the non-Germans. This suggest that the northern Netherlands were a quite attractive place to settle for more skilled workers like carpenters, tailors and so on. This situation remained until 1890, when there was a short term drop in the share of artisans. However, by 1931/34 again

more than 30% of the Germans were skilled workers in handicrafts and industry. The service sector became relatively more important for the German immigrants after 1880. However this lasted only until 1930, after which there is an unexplained drop, just in the period when the services became more important for the occupational structure of the Dutch in Groningen and Drenthe.

We already pointed at the farmers. Relatively few German immigrants became independent farmers upon marriage, a category comprising about 15% of the marrying Dutch. Only, around the period 1891/1900, for the reasons we just explained the share of farmers under the marrying German immigrants was greater, surpassing the 10% of all immigrants. In a later stage of the research we also want to look more closely at different specific occupations. Perhaps, there were occupations which were more or less monopolized by German immigrants. The low share of the German immigrants in the total amount of people marrying, suggests that these occupations will not have been very important in general.

7. Conclusion

We have presented the first results of our analysis of marrying German immigrants using the marriage certificates of Groningen and Drenthe in the period 1811-1934. There are some clear patterns in this German migration. The amount of German immigration fell in the second half of the nineteenth century, to revive after WW1. Males were originally by far the majority, while after WW1 suddenly females immigrants strongly dominate this migration. Immigrants were relatively often coming from the nearby Calvinistic regions of Ostfriesland and Bentheim, and only to a lesser extent from nearby Roman-Catholic Emsland. They settled mainly in the border municipalities, the city of Groningen, the small towns and the peat colonies. Especially the market-oriented rural area in the north of Groningen, still important around 1811/40, lost attraction during the rest of the nineteenth century. German immigrants (males and females) married consistently on average about two years later than those born in the Netherlands. However, this difference also disappeared after WW1.

In the future the big databases used offer more opportunities for analysis, for instance by looking at characteristics of German immigrants on a more regional level, and by doing more in-depth research to males and females in combination with profession. Also, it will be possible to look at the social background of the German immigrants, analyzing the occupations of parents which are quite often stated in the Dutch marriage registers. It might be interesting as well to connect our data to older and newer information. A brief review of older data suggests that German immigration to at least the city of Groningen might have been far more important in the eighteenth century than in the nineteenth century.

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